

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INT-05 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-14  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-07 OES-07 SOE-02  
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R 060831Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9970  
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 3498

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: TECH IN US  
SUBJECT: "STATESMAN" EDITORIAL ON TARAPUR FUEL STORAGE

1. THE MARCH 6 EDITION OF THE "STATESMAN" CARRIES THE  
FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON THE TARAPUR FUEL STORAGE QUESTION:  
BEGIN QUOTE:

2. TRUTH ABOUT TARAPUR

3. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CONFIRMED THAT PRODUCTION AT  
THE TARAPUR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT HAS BEEN STEPPED DOWN  
NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF UNCERTAIN FUEL SUPPLIES BUT ALSO  
BECAUSE OF THE ACCUMULATION OF USED FUEL WITHOUT ADEQUATE  
STORAGE CAPACITY. THE SECOND PROBLEM WOULD NOT HAVE  
ARISEN, AND VALUABLE NEW FUEL WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE  
IN THE FORM OF PLUTONIUM, IF THE SPENT FUEL HAD BEEN  
REPROCESSED AS PLANNED. MR. DESAI TOLD THE LOK SABHA  
THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD VIOLATED AN AGREEMENT IN  
THIS MATTER; HE MAY HAVE CREATED AN IMPRESSION THAT  
THE DIFFICULTIES WOULD BE REMOVED, AND THE AMERICAN  
OBLIGATION FULFILLED, IF WASHINGTON HELPED IN EXPANDING  
THE STORAGE FACILITIES AT TARAPUR. THAT WOULD ONLY  
BE A TEMPORARY SOLUTION; AND THE AMERICAN OBLIGATION,  
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APPARENTLY, WAS TO TAKE BACK THE SPENT FUEL RODS.  
LET ALONE BUY BACK THE USED FUEL, THE AMERICANS ARE  
UNWILLING EVEN TO BEAR THE COSTS OF PACKAGING, HANDLING  
AND TRANSPORTATION. IN ANY CASE, RESHIPMENT WOULD BE  
AN ELABORATE, DIFFICULT AND HIGHLY EXPENSIVE OPERATION.  
THE MOST SENSIBLE COURSE WOULD BE TO REPROCESS THE  
FUEL AT A PLANT ALREADY BUILT FOR THIS PURPOSE AT

TARAPUR; THIS WAS THE ORIGINAL INDIAN PLAN, PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED WHEN THE TARAPUR POWER STATION WAS BUILT. THE AMERICANS DID NOT OBJECT TO THE PLAN THEN, BUT ARE NOW BLOCKING THIS WORK BY INVOKING THE SAFEGUARDS PROVISIONS WHICH REQUIRE THEIR APPROVAL FOR WHATEVER USE TO WHICH THE FUEL OR ITS END-PRODUCTS MAY BE PUT. THE POINT HAS BEEN LEGITIMATELY MADE THAT, SINCE THE UNITED STATES HAS VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT REGARDING SPENT FUEL, INDIA SHOULD CONSIDER HERSELF FREE TO USE THE MATERIAL IN ANY WAY SHE WANTS. THIS WOULD BE AN EXTREME STEP, BUT AMERICAN POLICY MAY NOT LEAVE INDIA WITH ANY ALTERNATIVE TO DISREGARDING THE RESTRICTIVE PROVISIONS.

4. THERE COULD BE AT LEAST A TEMPORARY TECHNICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF STORING SPENT FUEL; THE DIFFICULTIES CREATED BY THE USA'S FAILURE TO FULFILL ITS CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION TO MEET TARAPUR'S FUEL NEEDS ARE MUCH MORE SERIOUS. THE LAST CONSIGNMENT OF ENRICHED URANIUM WAS SO DELAYED THAT IT HAD FINALLY TO BE FLOWN FROM THE UNITED STATES TO THE FUEL FABRICATION CENTER IN HYDERABAD, AT CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONAL EXPENSE TO INDIA. REQUEST FOR THE SHIPMENT WHICH IS NOW AWAITED WAS MADE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, AND IT SHOULD HAVE ARRIVED LAST AUTUMN. WHEN, DURING HIS VISIT TO NEW DELHI, PRESIDENT CARTER ANNOUNCED UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT FURTHER FUEL WOULD BE SUPPLIED FOR TARAPUR, HE MEANT NO MORE THAN THAT THIS PARTICULAR SHIPMENT, OF ONLY 7.6 TONNES, WOULD BE MADE. EVEN IN THIS SENSE, THE STATEMENT WAS MISLEADING. ALL THAT THE PRESIDENT CAN DO IS TO MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION, AND NO RECOMMENDATION HAD REACHED THE COMMISSION AFTER THREE WEEKS OF HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. IT MAY HAVE BY NOW, BUT PROMPT APPROVAL IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED. THE COMMISSION'S PROCEDURE IS TIME-CONSUMING, AND FURTHER DELAYS ARE LIKELY TO BE CAUSED BY OPPOSITION BY SO-CALLED "ENVIRONMENTALIST" GROUPS. THOUGH MR. DESAI SAID THAT INDIA WAS EXPECTING A SUPPLY OF 7.6 TONNES FOR THE TIME BEING, REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON SUGGEST THAT IT MAY BE DELAYED FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. AT THIS RATE, INDIA MAY NOT RECEIVE FURTHER SUPPLIES BEFORE U.S. LEGISLATION STOPS NUCLEAR EXPORTS EXCEPT ON CONDITIONS UNACCEPTABLE TO INDIA. IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO OPERATE THE TARAPUR REACTORS ON A FUEL OF NATURAL URANIUM MIXED WITH PLUTONIUM, BUT THIS TECHNOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE TO ENRICHED URANIUM NEEDS TO BE VIGOROUSLY PURSUED. IF

THE UNITED STATES STOPS FUEL SUPPLIES, INDIA WILL BE  
FREED FROM WHATEVER RESTRICTIONS SHE ACCEPTED UNDER  
THE SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT FOR TARAPUR. END QUOTE.  
GOHEEN

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** STORAGE, PRESS COMMENTS, NUCLEAR FUELS, NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 06 mar 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Disposition Event:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**TAGS:** TECH, IN, US  
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